

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH COLONEL BENJAMIN LUKEFAHR, U.S. ARMY, INTELLIGENCE TRANSITION TEAM, MULTINATIONAL SECURITY TRANSITION COMMAND-IRAQ VIA TELECONFERENCE FROM FORWARD OPERATING BASE SHIELD, BAGHDAD TIME: 10:00 A.M. EST DATE: WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 2009

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LIEUTENANT JENNIFER CRAGG (U.S. Navy, Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs): Hello. I'd like to welcome you all to the Department of Defense's Bloggers Roundtable for Wednesday, March 4th, 2009.

My name is Lieutenant Jennifer Cragg. I'm with the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs. And I'll be moderating the call today. A note to the bloggers on the line. Please remember to clearly state your name and the blog or organization you're with, prior to your question.

Today, our special guest is Colonel Benjamin Lukefahr. He's a senior adviser, Intelligence Transition Team. And with that, sir, I'm going to turn it over to you. If you'd like to, start with an opening-topic statement.

COL. LUKEFAHR: Well, first of all, thank you all very much for joining us and giving me the opportunity to speak to you all today. Like Jen said, I'm Colonel Ben Lukefahr. I'm an intelligence officer with the United States Army for the past 28.5 years.

My last assignment was with the National Security Agency in Hawaii, where I served as their chief of staff. And currently I'm serving as the senior adviser to the national information and investigation agency, minister of interior, Iraq, which is somewhat similar to our FBI there in the United States.

I'm also part of the Intelligence Transition Team for the Multinational Security Transition Command in Iraq. Let me first discuss, in general, the Intelligence Transition Team, which I stated earlier I am part of. And then I would like to address my specific advisory role with the NIIA.

The Intelligence Transition Team consists of about 150 personnel, military, DOD, civilians, contractors and cultural experts or our category-two linguists.

Our role is to help the Iraqi security force's intelligence organizations like the director-general for intelligence and security, similar to our DIA, the joint headquarters director of intelligence, like our Joint Staff J-2, and the M-2, N-2 and AF-2, the army, navy and air force respectively.

Also the intelligence and military service school, like our intelligence training center conducted at Fort Huachuca, the national information and investigative agency, like our FBI, the counterterrorism command, intelligence section, a joint effort with the Iraqi national counterterrorism task force, similar to our JSOC, Joint Staff.

With our manning, equipping, training and basing, our mission is to support capacity and advise them operationally with what we call performance.

As I said previously, the mission of the ITT is to assist the government of Iraq in developing, organizing, training, equipping and sustaining the intelligence organizations of the minister of defense and the minister of interior.

Specifically our team consists of 31 personnel -- this is my team specifically -- primarily military intelligence professionals from the Army, Navy, Air Force and Marines as well as law enforcement personnel from the Navy NCIS, Air Force OSI and several contractors, who are retired FBI agents. We also have, as part of our team, seven linguists. Together we advise and mentor the NIIA. However we also help other coalition transition teams, with the director of internal affairs, who advise other law enforcement elements of the minister of interior like the Iraqi police, national police, border and port enforcement, airport security, with their police and law enforcement operations.

We operate out of operational base, FOB Shield. And my team also has an element at Phoenix Base in the former Green Zone here in Baghdad.

The mission of the NIIA specifically is to conduct criminal intelligence or HUMINT collection and analysis, in support of law enforcement, or better explained as investigation and policing operations for the minister of interior.

In coordination with other intelligence and security elements, their mission is to penetrate major criminal networks and to prevent and defeat domestic criminal activities that threaten Iraqis' national security and stability.

So, how is the NIIA doing? We've seen marked improvement in their capacity and performance; however, they still have a long way to go, and specifically with the areas of trust and information sharing among themselves. We do see a genuine concern to do what is right under the Iraqi rule of law. Leadership is assignments based on capability, not based on personality. Several new capabilities have been created over the past several months. Let me just give you a few.

The new headquarters in Karrada, an 82,000-square-foot facility for their new headquarters and their Baghdad Information Bureau. Four trained polygraphers, who are now doing their own polygraphs on their own Iraqis. Twenty recruiting -- we're now recruiting 20 women to be investigators, which is a first for the NIIA. We have also installed secure communication, like our SIPRNet, to all those 15 provincial headquarters located throughout Iraq, and we're also working to upgrade their infrastructure at their national training academy.

I think I will stop there for now, and I look forward to answering your questions.

LT. CRAGG: Right. We had two more people join us, Jarred Fishman and then Christian. Jarred, you're going to be sixth, and Christian, you're going to be fifth. So let's go ahead and start with Sharon. Please go ahead.

Q Yeah. I was wondering if you could be a little more specific about the challenges going forward. You mentioned information sharing as one of them. Could you expand on that a little bit and maybe talk about some of the other issues you're facing -- or that they're facing as they go forward?

COL. LUKEFAHR: Yeah, absolutely. As you know, here in Iraq we have elements that are both Kurd, Shi'a and Sunnis, and you can imagine an organization that is trying to work together has to work hard to overcome trust among each other. And that is a hurdle they initially have to get over. And so, as you can imagine, we have -- from the investigative side, we have seen in the past organizations who only arrest or capture the opposite sectarian as they are. For example, if a Sunni is in the lead, then you see them predominantly, you know, capture Shi'as. Of if you're a Shi'a, you may see them predominantly focus on the Sunnis. And so we have spent a lot of time helping them to understand that they are here to support and secure the country of Iraq, and they have got to remove themselves from sectarian -- you know, segregation, if you will. Does that explain it in more detail for you?

Q Yeah. Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. Spencer, please?

Q Hi. It's Spencer Ackerman with the Washington Independent. Expanding on Sharon's question, could you talk a little bit more about the extent you're still seeing sectarianism in these agencies? And furthermore, there seem to be, from what you explain, a lot of kind of overlapping agencies. Is there a process in place for streamlining some of these functions? There -- are there redundant functions? Some of it, I imagine, would resonate with Iraqis, like the old Mukhabarat. Is there something in place that indicates getting around redundancies? Or am I misunderstanding?

COL. LUKEFAHR: No, I'm with you. There are clearly -- policies are being put in place to drive a national intelligence policy so that there is -- so they minimize overlap and redundancy.

But sometimes overlap is good. You know, we have -- you know, I work just one element of the intelligence transition team. We also have another team that focuses primarily on the Minister of Defense and their intelligence organization. And so we have spent a lot of time separating and distinctively identifying missions, functions and roles so they have a better appreciation of what each other's -- (inaudible) -- are. And so there's not a whole lot of overlap from that perspective.

In fact, they developed a national intelligence council. They have an individual who leads that effort, Dr. Rubaie. And the seniors from these intelligence organizations get together on a weekly basis and try to, clearly, work together, share together and try to minimize duplication of efforts and break down some of the barriers as it relates to trust.

And I think, you know, we all have the same challenges in the United States. It's taken us years -- in fact, you know, 9/11, as an (incident ?), (didn't ?) get OUR own intelligence agencies working together and sharing

information. So we're trying to do the same thing here in Iraq with the senior intelligence partners.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. Let's go ahead and move on to Chuck. And we'll make sure everybody gets a second chance at questions. So Chuck, please go ahead. Q Hello, Colonel. Chuck Simmins from America's North Shore Journal. Thank you for taking the time to talk with us today.

COL. LUKEFAHR: Thank you, Chuck, for being here.

Q I wanted to ask about -- I've asked before -- other individuals involved in police work in Iraq -- you have what we call traditional crimes as well as the terrorist problem.

You have smuggling organizations, you have kidnap rings, you have -- you know, all of the crime that goes along with just modern western society.

Are you devoting any effort at all to intelligence gathering and -- and securing information on the various criminal gangs and criminal activities that are going on within Iraq?

COL. LUKEFAHR: Chuck, that's a great question. In fact, we at the coalition are working very hard to separate, and what I would call classify, levels of crime; level one being the most serious crimes affecting national interest and security; level two what I call those crimes that may cross municipal boundaries and are, you know, lower crimes -- not counterterrorism, but things like, you know, value thefts, kidnapping, drugs, serial murders; and then level three, which is the lowest level of crime, basically focused on basic law and order.

So exactly what you're talking about, we are working with the Iraqis' intelligence structure, focusing on two areas. And I think this is important to distinguish for you. One is law enforcement operations, where you collect information and conduct investigations to bring it through the judicial court system.

The other part of the intelligence organization focuses on criminal intelligence. And that is where I would call it more the covert-like operations, where that information is protected and the individuals working in criminal intelligence organizations as collectors are not brought into the judicial system, much like you would see with investigation.

Did that help clarify for you?

Q Yeah. So the second thing you're talking about is similar to -- in the United States we would be familiar with the FBI working within the Mafia, or working within a drug cartel?

COL. LUKEFAHR: Well, even so, though, the FBI, their information can still support investigation.

Q Yeah.

COL. LUKEFAHR: And I'm not that familiar with the FBI to say do their investigators get pulled into as part of the judicial system and actually present information in the court. Q Ah, okay.

COL. LUKEFAHR: This is fairly covert collection that is separated. And it does mean that the information doesn't get into the hands of investigators, but there clearly has to be probable cause on the investigators' side to be able to issue warrants and conduct further investigation.

Q All right.

COL. LUKEFAHR: (Inaudible) -- and it's very awkward and hard to separate when you're in a counterintelligence fight, where we would stay you're still at war but we're trying to transition them to a peacetime-like organization. So it's very blurred at this point. But at the end of the day, you know, there's a rule of law and, you know, a peaceful, you know, environment, but it is -- it is -- it does muddy the water a little bit when you're still fighting the COIN fight.

Q Well, are they making arrests in what we would consider to be ordinary crimes?

COL. LUKEFAHR: Absolutely. Now, you would also probably agree that the preponderance of what they're doing is counterterrorism- focused. But they are focusing on the recent elections, potential threats to the -- you know, assassination of those officials or potential threats to the electors, to the folks who were, you know, competing for election. We're into now bank -- not -- but crimes of -- financial crimes. You could all label those as counterterrorism acts but they have clearly separated the distinction between the types of crimes and the levels of crimes.

Q Okay, thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Okay, let's go on to Sean. Sean, you're next, please. Sean Gallagher, are you still on the line?

Okay, if he's dropped off --

Q Yes, I'm here. I'm here. I'm here. I just -- sorry, I --

(Cross talk.) (Laughter.)

LT. CRAGG: Okay. Go ahead. Sorry about that, Sean.

Q I was going to say -- I was just saying -- Colonel, this is Sean Gallagher, from defensesystems.com and thepacketrat.com.

COL. LUKEFAHR: Hey, Sean.

Q I wanted to ask a little bit more about the information infrastructure that you're helping the government of Iraq put in place. You mentioned putting in something equivalent to SIPRNet. What other information infrastructure are you helping put in place to aid the intelligence community there? And what are some of the challenges you're facing in that regard? And sort of as a follow-up to that, what sorts of ISR assets are you helping them acquire and put in place?

COL. LUKEFAHR: Yeah, I'm not as familiar on the MOD side, so I won't be as specific as probably an MOD intel advisor would share. But we're putting in -- let me start with the ISR piece first. (Inaudible) -- and ISR capability, downlink capability into their operational centers. We're starting to build a

very rudimentary SIGINT tactical collection capability, where you -- (inaudible) -- communications.

Pretty much we're trying to replicate as much of our military intelligence-like structure here in Iraq much as we have in the United States -- obviously not the sophistication of capability that we have, but clearly a rudimentary capability.

From the network perspective, the primary communications link we're putting in is called the Iraqi intelligence network. And that is something that our team, ITT, has put into all of the Iraqi intelligence organizations at their headquarters level and in each of the 15 provinces to their headquarters locations there.

We're now looking at expanding that capability to other intelligence personnel assigned to places like national police, borders, ports, airports and those kinds of things. But that is really the only infrastructure SIPR-like capability that we're putting in.

They have their own communications networks. Unfortunately, it's not very protected, and so we're trying to move them away from cell phones and, you know, guiding them to use -- (inaudible) -- and to give them a secure capability.

Q Okay. Thank you, sir.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. Let's move on to Christian. Christian, please go ahead.

Q Hi, Colonel. This is Christian Lowe with military.com.

COL. LUKEFAHR: Hi. How are you?

Q The last time we spoke about this issue or the last time I've participated in one of these, most of the focus was on training the Iraqis to deal with the gathering intelligence on internal threats. To what extent have you been able to focus your attention on training them to gather intelligence on threats from outside the country? Have you guys done all that? COL. LUKEFAHR: I think our main focus is first to teach them whether you're looking internally or externally on processes of how you would do that, regardless where they're operating from. I personally believe -- at least in my role -- is we're looking on those organizations that are operating within the country of Iraq or the indigenous land, if you will.

There are other elements and organizations who support external, but for the most part our team's mission is focusing on teaching them capability to do analysis in looking at, you know, cross-border operations. But I would say we are not really focused on threats inside of other countries that are posing threats to Iraq.

Q Why not?

COL. LUKEFAHR: Well, I'm not sure I can go into too much detail about that. I mean, if you talk about a CIA-like capability, that's not something we do as ITT. That's something for another organization who has that responsibility.

Q Okay.

COL. LUKEFAHR: We are focusing on threats from other countries but primarily operating in Iraq.

Q Thank you.

COL. LUKEFAHR: It doesn't mean they're -- it doesn't mean the Iraqis are not interested in working on that, but our primary responsibility is to teach them how to do the intelligence collecting and investigative processes of those organizations or countries that may be operating in Iraq.

Q Okay. Gotcha. Thanks.

LT. CRAGG: Okay -- (inaudible).

Q Yes, sir. Thank you for your time. Can you talk a little bit about the counterintelligence and the internal affairs parts of the intelligence apparatus? In other words, has there been an ability to conduct independent investigations into crime within the force or different parts of the interior defense ministry? I think that's always been a problem in the past few years.

COL. LUKEFAHR: You mean within their own organization, like within the Ministry of Interior, their internal affairs, looking at their own people?

Q Correct.

COL. LUKEFAHR: Yeah. Good question. Relatively new -- we're working on what I'm calling a personal security program. And then I'll address more specifically your point, but we're trying to get them to stand up a -- two things, a security classification system that recognizes level of classification of their documents and information and a personnel assurance program that vets people to have access to those three levels of classification.

And that's something relatively new that we're inculcating here within the intelligence organization and MOD and MOI at large. This is not just an intelligence thing. But it's relatively embryonic, but they're at least moving in that direction.

You know, I'm not that involved with the internal affairs, but I do know my specific organization, the NIIA, does have an IA section and they have investigated their own people. The specifics of that, you know, I really don't have the insights on. But I do know they have an IA capability within most of the government of Iraq organizations.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. Let's get a chance to have everybody ask one additional question if possible. I'll just go around the horn. Sharon, you were first. Do you have any follow-up questions?

Q No, not at the moment. Thanks.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. Let's go to Spencer.

Q I have two, if that's okay, real quick.

LT. CRAGG: Roger that.

Q Sir, you mentioned that ITT was putting in an -- the Iraqi intelligence network at the organization headquarter levels at each of the -- I think you said 15 provinces.

COL. LUKEFAHR: Correct.

Q Did you mean to say 15? What provinces are being left out, then?

(Cross talk.)

COL. LUKEFAHR: Yeah. The Kurdistan provinces --

Q Kurdistan wasn't -- okay.

COL. LUKEFAHR: Right. The three provinces in Kurdistan, we at ITT do not have responsibility for. We're focusing only on those provinces that are not under Iraqi control.

Q Does that mean that the Iraqi intelligence organizations basically stop at the Kurdistan border and Kurdistan is kind of out --

COL. LUKEFAHR: No. I'm saying -- no.

Q And if I could ask one more real quick, you mentioned Dr. Rubaie was chairing the National Intelligence Council. How is it that he manages to remain as national security adviser despite all of these transitions?

COL. LUKEFAHR: You know what? I don't know. I don't know that well enough. I'm not at the NIC. You would need to ask someone else that question.

But, you know, there's challenges with -- even in his role in other intelligence organizations, recognizing who he is, but there's still not a true DNI-like-role person out here that we're trying to steer them to stand up. And so there are still challenges with him sitting at the head table, from INIS, NIIA and DGIS as the key players out here. So it's not quite as clean.

And I'm sure, as you would -- as you would probably agree, it's very, you know, politically based, depending on who the prime minister is or who the president is. And I think things are going to change over the next six months, and you may see less Kurds in position and more Shi'as and Sunnis.

Q (Inaudible) --

COL. LUKEFAHR: Because the Kurds have a pretty good insight right now, in leading two of the intelligence organizations today.

Q Which ones are those?

COL. LUKEFAHR: The NIIA and DGIS.

Q And what was that second one? Sorry.

COL. LUKEFAHR: D-G-I-S.

Q D-G-I-S. Thank you, sir.



COL. LUKEFAHR: Yeah.

Now, just let me caveat that. They've been here three or four years, so, you know, it is time for them to potentially rotate out of those positions. But I'm not sure we will see a -- you know, a Kurd step in their place. That's just my personal opinion.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. Chuck?

Q Well, he took my question. (Laughs.) So I've got another one, then.

Colonel, one of the things that the United States military and police are pretty good at is intelligence collection at the street level by individual police officers, individual privates and corporals. We're able to gather that information and analyze it fairly quickly and effectively. Can you talk a little -- are you able to talk a little bit about what you're doing with the Iraqis in that regard?

COL. LUKEFAHR: Sure. You know, I would agree with you that the -- that at the -- what I would call Level 3 crimes, the Iraqis are pretty good. But they've been focusing on counterterrorism for a long time. And I personally, both professionally and individually, believe they have a tremendous amount of HUMINT collection capability and are very, very good at it.

When you compare historically -- which I've gathered over the last nine months -- the Iraqis are much better putting together target folders, actioning and arresting than the United States is here in Iraq doing arresting and actioning. Percentages -- just roughly speaking, the Iraqi success rate in arrests from the time they nominate a target -- (inaudible) -- counterterrorist target is roughly, you know, 35 to 40 percent success rate. Coalition is somewhere under 30 percent. You know, 25 to 30. They're better at HUMINT. We as coalition is -- are better at SIGINT. So I hope that answers your question.

Q Yes. Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. Sean?

Q Yes. Wanted to ask a little bit more about the information-sharing side of things, in terms of whether or not there was any specific technology that could be put in place to help build the trust level to the point where people -- (audio break).

COL. LUKEFAHR: Yeah. No, good point.

I think, you know, the first thing we started was recognizing the need to vet and polygraph their own key leaders, which we started -- the polygraph course started back in June, and they graduated just before Thanksgiving. And we have vetted a lot of Iraqi senior leaders on the intelligence side through coalition polygraphers. And now, as I said before, the Iraqis are polygraphing their own people.

I think that helps them break down some of the barriers as it relates to trust. You can imagine over the years that if information gets leaked, people die, and they have actually seen that, so they're very, you know, hesitant on sharing sensitive information until they truly can build that trust and have a relationship among each other. And so we've made some progress in

that area, but they are clearly not sharing at the level that we would like them to be. But look how long it takes some of our coalition to share information among agencies.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. Let's move to Christian and Jarred.

Q Hi, Colonel. Christian Lowe again from military.com. Just a quick follow-up. Are you getting any support in your efforts from the private security company community?

COL. LUKEFAHR: Meaning who?

Q Are your efforts conducted solely by military personnel or do you have subcontracts with private security companies that help train the Iraqi intelligence community?

COL. LUKEFAHR: Well, I can just say we have a good relationship with the FBI and the State Department, where FBI is sponsoring the training of master instructors, at least within my organization. Most recently the FBI provided us 18 instructors who came out in November, be coming back again in April, and then they are actually going to nominate and sponsor Iraqis to go back to places like Quantico and continue their professional teaching program so they could come back here as master instructors for our National Information Academy.

There are clearly other contracted vehicles. I can't say specifically the civilian organizations involved, but a huge effort up at Camp Dublin that trains our very specialized, you know, forces. We have the Law and Order Task Force out here training investigators from many of the Iraqi organizations. So there are a lot of partners. This is clearly not just a military-led effort. In fact, over time, as you are probably leaning towards, this means a transition to -- away from the military and over to a civilian structure. Q Yeah. Okay, I'm sorry. I'm not talking civilian government; I'm talking about civilian -- in other words, private security company. Are they assisting you in training?

COL. LUKEFAHR: Can you give me an example?

Q Like a Blackwater, or like a DynCorp or an SAIC.

COL. LUKEFAHR: Oh, we have some -- DynCorp is definitely out here as part of our contract, and I have --

Q How much of a chunk -- how much of a chunk of the training is being conducted by civilian companies that you're --

COL. LUKEFAHR: Okay. Sure. No, we had a huge effort within PRI and DynCorp over the past several years, but today I will tell you we are about helping the Iraqis teach themselves. So it's clearly less coalition teaching, and more about Iraqi teaching themselves. And that is at the military intelligence pool up at Taji, as well as our specific organization at -- here in Baghdad.

So they're teaching themselves. They're at that level at this point. Now, when there is new instruction that we are bringing in, because we're going through a huge curriculum development, the plan is we teach the first class. One of their instructors observes. Then we observe them teaching that -- the next class. And then they're on their own. That's the point that we are in training.

Q Okay. Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Okay, we have just a tiny bit of time for Jarred. Did you have an additional question, Jarred?

Q Yes, ma'am. How about -- can you talk a little about is there enough training schools, technical schools, as people in Iraq become intelligence officers and then proceed up the chain of command? What are the plans for expanding those training schools to ensure that it will be self-sufficient once we leave?

COL. LUKEFAHR: Yes. Intelligence, or law enforcement?

Q Intelligence.

COL. LUKEFAHR: Or both?

Q Both.

COL. LUKEFAHR: Yeah, on the intel side, we've built an intelligence academy at Taji. Their throughput is about 400 students per class. They run approximately three classes a year, along with intermediate and advanced courses. But, you know, we're trying to -- I think we have a requirement to train, you know, 40,000 intel folks, and to date, we've trained maybe 2,500 of them. So the throughput is increasing significantly, but clearly the capacity isn't there to train as many as we would like all at one given time.

LT. CRAGG: Okay. Well, with that, sir, we are right at the 30-minute mark. So if you would like to go ahead and close with a closing statement, if you'd like?

COL. LUKEFAHR: Sure. First of all, again, you know, thank you for giving us the opportunity to tell you about what we're doing here in Iraq. And you know, as I mentioned, you know, obviously, we've seen a lot of significant improvements and increase -- or actually, reduction in -- in the safety of what's going on out here in Iraq, but there's still a long way to go. And our transition team efforts clearly are focusing on transitioning processes to them, so they can take care of their -- take care of themselves.

LT. CRAGG: And thank you, sir.

And thank you, to all the bloggers that were on the line today, for the questions.

Just a note to everybody on the line: Today's program will be available online at the bloggers link on DOD.mil, or Defenselink, as well as a story based on today's call, as well as the transcript and bios.

Again, sir, thank you for participating in the Department of Defense's bloggers roundtable for March 4th. Thank you, sir.

COL. LUKEFAHR: Thank you.

END.